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Dear Lawmakers,

First, I would like to thank you for taking the time to hear my testimony and the testimony of our public on such a serious topic as providing an opportunity for review of sentences of ten years or more served by persons who were under eighteen years of age when they committed their crimes. I am here in FULL support of Bill 6581.

I am here to speak as a social worker. I am a senior at Southern Connecticut State University, majoring in Social Work with a minor in psychology. As social workers, we are taught in our first semester about the human brain development. While there have been many individuals that have theorized over the years about humans and their development, Erickson is one in which the social workers focus! Erickson is a well-respected-psychosocial developmental theorist. Erickson explains in GREAT detail, what it means to be an adolescent. Erickson defines adolescent as a stage of human development between the ages of 11-20 years of age. The life stage of development is labeled *Identity vs. Role Confusion*. Erickson states; *at this stage of development adolescents try to develop a sense of who they are and where they are going in life and can become confused on their identity*. Meaning, adolescents have a lot of peer pressure from outside their home and it is intensified by the demands being made on them in the home. As a Social Worker, I strongly believe in Erickson's stages of development and apply them to the stipulations of the juveniles in our correctional system whom many of have fell victim to the peer pressures of wanting to "fit in". This sense of confusion, on behalf of such adolescents, may result in poor decision making, resulting in the outcome of punishment. the punishment for such adolescents, are put in place by adults to teach the adolescent to mature and grow from the experience. By passing Bill 6581, you are allowing these inmates an opportunity to prove their rehabilitation, their growth and maturation.

The juvenile justice system was originally created for children because it was obvious that adolescents and adults *are* different cognitively and should therefore, be treated accordingly. Our Constitution states that we have the right to stand before a jury of our peers. Therefore, "juveniles" are supposed to stand before a jury of their peers; however, as adults we understand that's illogical. To have an adolescent decide the fate of another adolescent will NEVER happen because that adolescent is still a child and can't fully understand the extent of the crime being presented and comprehend all the legal terminology. Yet, according to our current law, a child who commits a crime is *instantly* an adult who can fully comprehend plea deals, legal terms and

apparently what exactly life sentences without the possibility of parole assumes. Who can truly fathom the idea of a 30 or 60 plus year sentence???

As a Social Worker, I vow to assist the state in any program that needs to be created to help these individuals once they are home. Social workers are trained to understand trauma, brain development and pain. I want to give of myself in any way to aide in the release of and after the release of these individuals and in turn, I am pleading please, please, give this bill a second look and agree to make a huge positive difference in the lives of the 191 individuals in the state of Connecticut, by allowing them something; a simple opportunity at parole.

It is understood that this opportunity does not guarantee release, yet by passing Bill 6581, you are only allowing these individuals and opportunity to display their rehabilitation and that the lesson in their punishment has been taught. I am just as confident in that the Board of Pardons and Paroles are more than capable of assessing individuals in determining if they are suitable to rejoin society as I am confident that you, our lawmakers, will provide the humane "opportunity" for the 191 Connecticut inmates and pass Bill 6581.

Again, I thank you for your time,

Aurelia Aleman-Price